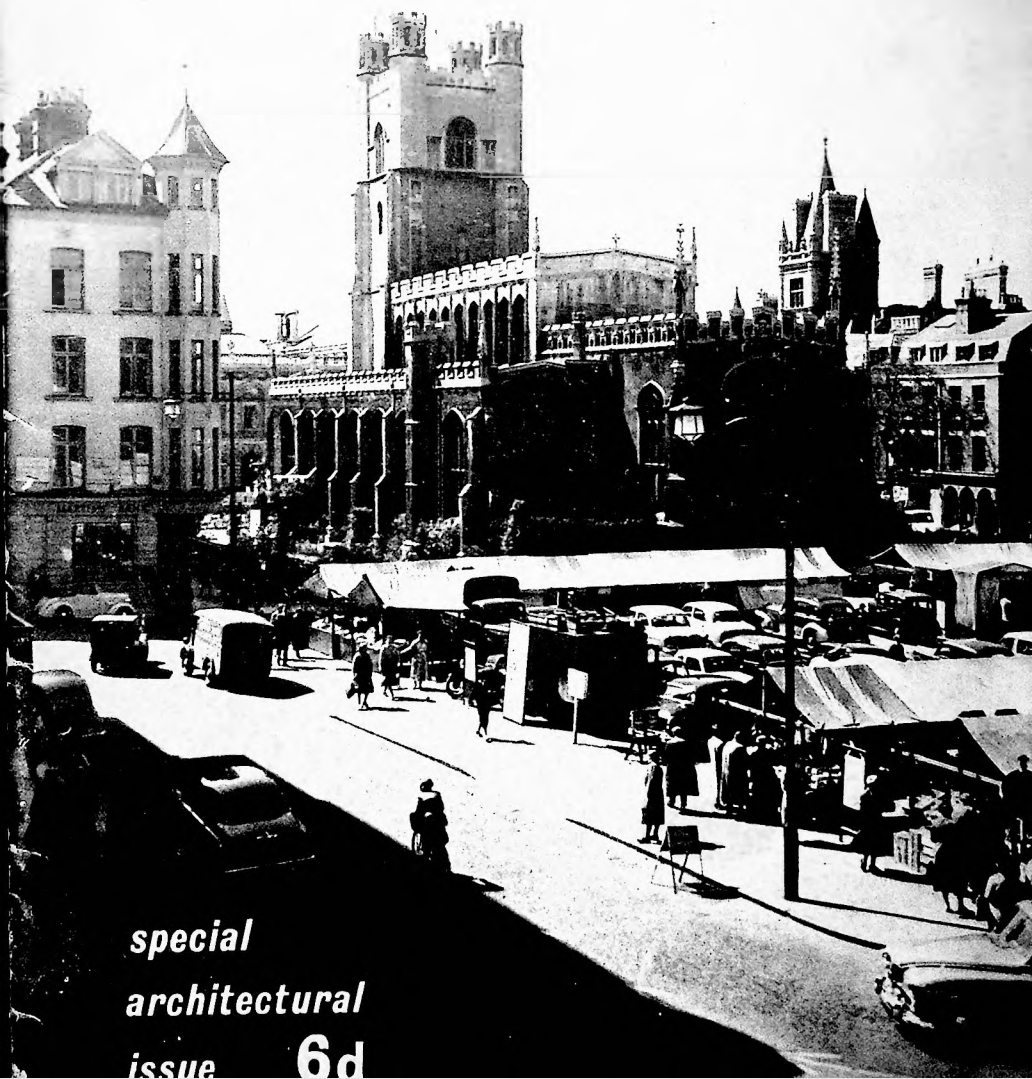


# cambridge opinion 4



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## EDITORIAL & INTRODUCTION

Next year, Cambridge Opinion will appear twice a term. Half of each issue will be a symposium of articles concerned with a specific contemporary problem (the first will be education) while the other half will be devoted to short stories, poems and the like. Obviously, we cannot have the final word on any topic; but we can at least do it justice by gathering a number of views upon it in one issue. We hope that this, plus the creative writing, will give those undergraduates who feel themselves involved with their own society a reason to read the magazine with interest; and, if they wish to write, a chance to do so without feeling that they have to hide their immaturity behind a mask of sophistication. Occasionally, we intend to produce such a supplement as this, devoted to a topic on which we think comment is required.

This pamphlet has been prepared with the help of the Cambridge Group for Architecture & Planning, a collection of people from the University and the Town who have been meeting regularly during the past year to discuss developments affecting the city. The group has arranged meetings addressed by architects and planners with an interest in Cambridge and has produced reports on a number of buildings, some of which have been published. But while this booklet has been written by members of the group, the views expressed must not be taken to commit other members or the group as a whole.

The buildings put up in Cambridge this century have been an almost unrelieved disappointment. As recently as 1955 the Veterinary School was opened - a building which has already done extreme violence (and may by its example do still more) to the peculiar quality of Cambridge. Recently, however, there have been signs of a clearer awareness of what is required of a new building in Cambridge: the enterprising layout of the proposed Arts Faculty complex on the Sidgwick Avenue site, the delicate work still being carried out at Magdalene and the distinguished design for the proposed hostel for Clare bear witness to a change of heart.

The kind of understanding represented by these achievements may, nonetheless, be slow to come. It is in the hope that we may be able to speed such an understanding that we have prepared this pamphlet. It has not been confined to the colleges and the University: Cambridge, we feel, must look equally to its town buildings, its streets, shops and houses. Thus, because there is a conflict of uses in the city, we have felt bound to include some reference to planning as well as to the purer aspects of design (the two cannot of course be adequately treated in separation). But in doing so we have tried to bear in mind, to keep as an essential reference point, those qualities which seemed to us vital to Cambridge - its scale, its intimacy, its precision both in mass and in detail. Our excuse for treating the city as a whole is that we are disinterested, and for writing at all that we are concerned. It is in the spirit of these convictions that we hope this pamphlet will be received.

Enquiries and contributions for the next issue should be addressed to David Leitch, St. John's College, Cambridge.

## COLLEGE BUILDINGS



Fig. 1. Clare Memorial Court:  
"a corridor as much as a court"



Fig. 2. St. Michael's Court, Caius:  
"joining the older building clumsily"

Courts and quadrangles remain the most appropriate form for a college. If a college is intended to be a community, to make possible some degree of corporate life, then it is right that it should look inwards on itself and consist of a space surrounded and defined by buildings, so that the space becomes the natural focus and meeting-place for those who live around it. The use of courts, each budding onto the others as the college needs to expand, allows the college to look complete at any stage - unless some court is unfinished, for the essential quality of a successful court is that it is closed, private, and the outsider enters by courtesy and not by right. It is lack of this quality that makes Clare Memorial Court (Fig. 1) unsuccessful: it is a corridor as much as a court, and looks not inwards on itself but outwards and upwards to the University Library. The lack of intimacy is emphasized by the too monumental scale and by the heavy detail of the design. Benson Court, Magdalene, would have been similarly overbearing if it had been finished as originally planned, with the red Lutyens building repeated on three sides of a court open to the river. North Court at Emmanuel is more successful, though its privacy cannot make the architecture less dull.

These are the only two courts to have been built complete in this century: North Court, St. John's, is disastrously incomplete, and the Fisher Building at Queen's does not even try to produce an enclosure. A number of colleges have, however, had opportunity to fill in incomplete courts. Chapel Court at St. John's is quite successful, though its style is ambiguous and its solidity oppressive. But the new south range of St. Michael's Court, Caius, is not only too big, joining the older building very clumsily, but is cut off from the court by the frigid terrace (Fig. 2).



Fig. 3. (above) Fen Court, Peterhouse



Fig. 4. (above, right) Third Court, Christ's

Fig. 5. (right) The new building, Pembroke



Fen Court, Peterhouse is much more courteous to its older neighbours. The west side of Gisborne Court has not been completely closed, but the general effect is attractive (Fig. 3) and the grouping of the sub-court to the north is particularly good.

All these have been attempts to create a pattern of buildings with some order to it: the architects have understood that loosely grouped blocks do not make a good court. This point is proved at Third Court, Christ's (Fig. 4), where the new blocks have been dumped round a prohibitively sunk garden. One does not willingly stop to talk here, for the post-war blocks are expressionless and unfriendly. Dull neo-Georgian architecture is the main cause of this, though the adoption of the corridor system and the resulting lack of doors does contribute to it: there is a sense of neither enclosure nor intimacy. (Corridors, incidentally, have a social disadvantage: the rooms are strung out in long lines with no space suited to casual meeting, no sense of bunching, as on staircases, to encourage personal contacts. At Newnham, where the corridors are wider, and are varied with many bays and branches, the effect is less marked, though the excessive length does result in unfortunate dispersal).

Pembroke has made a similar mistake (Fig. 5). Its new block neither completes a court, nor makes a possible start for a new one. It stands alone, trying to be imposing by assuming a fresh axis and observing symmetry, but failing because it is badly proportioned and dull, and because it bears no intelligible relationship with the older buildings. Much the same could be said of the feeble Garden Hostel of King's, and of the new block at Homerton.

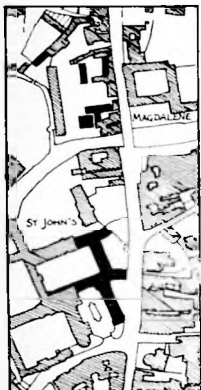


Fig. 6. Reconstructed cottages at Magdalene, and the whole scheme compared in plan with St. John's

In Magdalene, the story is very different. Benson Court had an unpromising start - the long, ugly Lutyens block and the cottages fronting Magdalene Street. It was not possible to link them and make fully enclosed courts of a simple shape. But by reconstructing some of the cottages and building two freestanding blocks in strategic positions, the architect has managed to produce a series of related spaces completely enclosed, pleasant to live in and to walk round (Fig. 6).

To say that colleges should look inwards is not to suggest that they should pay no attention to the effect they have on the street, the river, or their surroundings. The Fisher building at Queens' seems to disregard this effect completely (Fig. 7). The architect has not only failed to form a court: he has done violence to the whole area in which the building stands. The curve contradicts that of the street; the entrance is scrappy, the disjointed outbuildings are exposed; the chance to form a fine funnel to the river at the entrance to the pool has been wasted; and the quiet restraint of the common and the pool is shattered by the great strident wall of brick, looking (as Professor Pevsner has it) like a block of flats at Pinner.



Fig. 7.



Fig.8. Bridge Street

The Fisher Building is not alone in ignoring its duty to its neighbourhood. This duty is most urgent when the building is to form part of a street as well as of a college. The double purpose is not easily achieved, but various methods have worked - the open court of St. Catherine's, square to the street; the bold show of King's, which contrasts effectively with the informality opposite; the plain front of Christ's. With all these the shape of the street is preserved. But Bridge Street (Fig.8) has been blown open by St. John's to allow for the misplaced monumentality of the North Court *cour d'honneur* and the mean service wing near the chapel. It is no longer a street, but a wandering space edged by a medley of buildings, which make sense neither individually nor as a group. The loss can be gauged by a glance at Magdalene Street, and is shown graphically in Fig.6.

By contrast the Market Hill front of Caius (Fig.9) is almost a success, for it does clearly define the shape of the Square. It is one storey too high to allow a full sense of continuity on that side of the Market-place, and the coarseness and regularity of its windows prevent it being as courteous a foil to Great St. Mary's as it could be. But the arcade of shops underneath is attractive and prosperous, and affords a good example of the happy combination of town and college uses in a single building.



Fig.9. Caius front

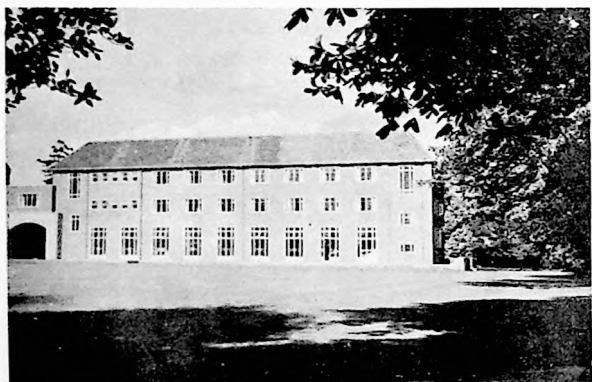


Fig. 10. Homerton  
new building

The architect at Caius did attempt a modern style. So does Fen Court, Peter-house, and very much more successfully: some features have dated already (the round west end, for example), but the general effect is very pleasing: there is no sense of striving - the colonnade is naturally attractive, the angles are handled easily and skilfully, the roof-line is simple and the window detailing straightforward. Elsewhere there has been the dubious expedient of copying a previous style (Tudor at Jesus, Victoria Gothic at King's), an occasional freak (Queens'), some feeble dabs at 'modernism' (the staircase windows in the otherwise conventionally modish apartment-house-Tudor of North Couts, St. John's); most often some variant of neo-Georgian as at Christ's, Pembroke, or Memorial Court, Clare. The new building at Homerton (Fig. 10), which may count as a college for this purpose, is not only inexcusably clumsy in its massing and proportion but holds the most unmannered jumble of heavily-detailed windows.

At Downing the architects have departed from the early nineteenth-century plan enough to be irritating without creating anything new. Every detail is coarsened. The parapet, no longer pierced, is too big for the pediment and for the windows; the windows are badly spaced, too far apart on the middle floor and too close on the top (where there are twice as many!); the portico masks the entrance to the chapel, so the latter's presence cannot be guessed till one is inside it.

What this obviously points to is that Georgian solutions are not good solutions to the problems confronting the architect today: if he tries them, the windows get out of proportion or the rooms are the wrong shape. In the one completely successful recent scheme in Cambridge - Benson Court, Magdalene - no compromise has been attempted. Instead, to complete a complex of small enclaves made by the restored cottages, two neat modern blocks have been built, restrained in scale and in detail, making no effort to 'fit in' by copying, but fitting in perfectly through their own integrity, modesty of scale and lack of ostentation. The result is an enclosure of singular charm, the one modern bit of Cambridge in which one can walk with unalloyed delight.



## UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS

Until the University began to educate large numbers of students in the sciences, it had no need to build large lecture-rooms and laboratories, and could therefore do its job within the bounds of the college buildings and the old school. Thus the students had always a precinctual environment, marked by that sense of order which we have suggested is common to the colleges.

But from 1863, when the first building for the sciences was started on the New Museums Site, to 1957 when the Chemistry Laboratory is near completion, no new University building has shown the slightest effort to extend this sense of order: or if it has, that effort has been confounded by later architects. Thus the New Museums Site is a shambles, the Downing Site has almost lost such shape as it had, Mill Lane is a mere lecturing battery, and the laboratories off Trumpington and Lensfield Roads a gargantuan chaos, overwhelming the modest scale of the area in which they are set (Fig. 11).

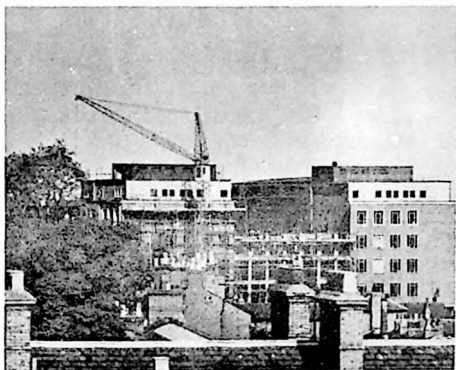


Fig. 11. Chemistry Laboratory,  
Lensfield Road

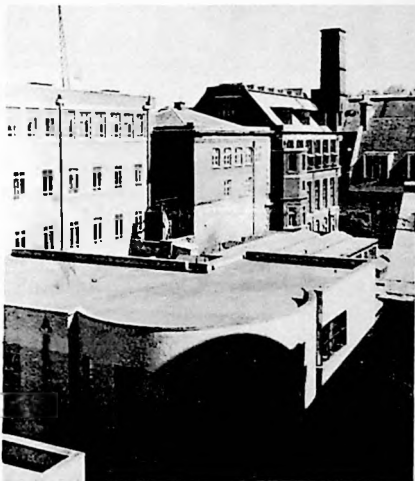


Fig. 12. "fresh air is at a premium"

Is this disorder desirable? Most Department heads demand compactness: they want both the primary teaching rooms and the secondary research rooms under one roof and near the town centre. But such compactness may, and often does, prevent the attainment of the other demands made by the faculty. Reasonably free circulation is needed for example, both inside and outside the building, with handy parks for bicycles and cars. Light is needed, particularly for laboratories: insulation from sound and smell: room for students to stretch their limbs and relax between lectures: room for the department to expand. The more you cram onto a site, the less these necessary qualities can be achieved. This is clearly shown in Fig. 12 taken inside the New Museums Site. Here light and fresh air are at a premium, and the circulation space becomes a dark and tortuous corridor.

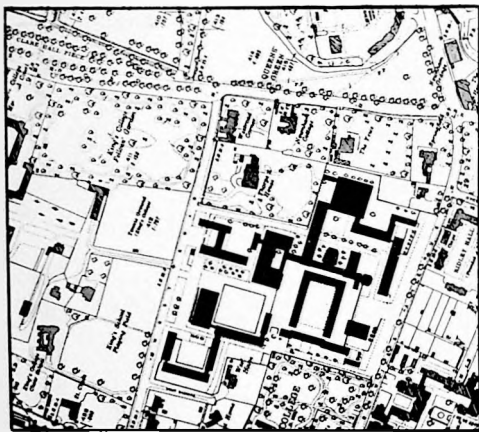


Fig. 13. The New Museum Site (top) and Downing Site (bottom): "lacking any sense of effective architectural coherence."

The New Museums site and the Downing Site are shown in plan in Fig. 13. The former was originally a garden. It is now so covered with buildings that there is room for one near-court, two pieces of grass and one tree. This famous group of buildings in the centre of Cambridge lacks any sense of architectural coherence: the open spaces which might be courts are cluttered with sheds or used (inevitably) as car parks (Fig. 15).

The Downing Site is one stage luckier, in that the entrance brings one into what is certainly a court; but so dull and large are the buildings that one cannot feel restful, and an intruding hut has already started the accustomed attrition. Such other courts as did exist have been filled with sheds and single-storey research wings (Fig. 16). In any case, the main blocks are too big and too heavily designed to allow any intimacy and restfulness in the enclosure. Between buildings as monumental as the Agriculture School and its neighbours, there must be commensurate space, or the show architecture will not be on show. The central portico of Downing College, for example, is only effective because it faces onto wide lawns.

The cramming of buildings onto the ground thus destroys any sense of coherence in the site: it can also do great damage to the surrounding town. The congestion of the Mill Lane Lecture Rooms and the Pitt Press causes some of the worst traffic jams in the city: Fig. 17 shows the former debouching. Similarly, the opening of the new Chemistry Laboratories in Lensfield Road will throw even greater strain on the crossing by Scroope Terrace, where traffic lights have but recently been installed. But more serious is the effect of these huge structures

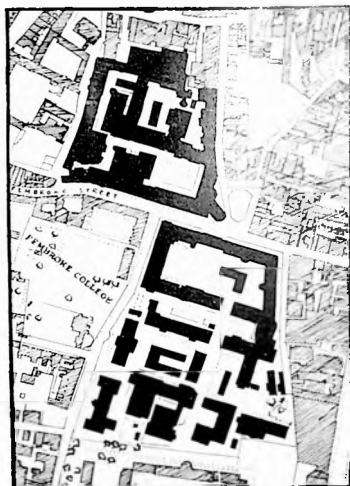


Fig. 14. The Sidgwick Site:  
"the proper approach."



Fig. 16. "Courts filled with sheds"

Fig. 15. (left) "used (inevitably) as car parks"

on the scale of that part of the town. They tower above the modest housing of New Town, changing completely the character of the area. Is this the first wave in the gradual engulfing of the whole stretch from Downing Street to Bateman Street by University buildings: and if so, will the undoubted present charm of the area be replaced by something equally worthy? Seeing the chaos behind the Engineering block (Fig. 18), or the chasm in the middle of the Chemistry Laboratory, one can reasonably doubt it. Too high a density is demanded to allow a controlled scale in the buildings. Sites inevitably look cluttered, the traffic pressure naturally increases, and men, trees and other buildings alike are cowed.

Fig. 17. Mill Lane debouching

Fig. 18.



Is compactness worth all this, and is there an alternative? Fig. 14 shows the scheme for the Sidgwick Site, based on courts like a college plan, and standing in striking contrast with the dense building of the New Museums and Downing Sites.

Work started on the Sidgwick Site this year. It is intended for Arts faculties only, but its design is based on two principles which can as validly be applied to science faculty buildings - the creation of surroundings with a varied delight, and at the same time provision for growth as and when it is wanted. Thus the architects of the Sidgwick development envisage the completion of one court as the first stage, a single building to house three departments. Each part of this building is designed not only to serve its own purpose, library, study or seminar room, but to be adaptable if need be to other purposes. The smallest of the three faculties is seen as a 'joker' feature, which can be shifted out and housed elsewhere if either of the other two wishes to expand. And the court, though only the first part of a scheme which will take shape over the course of years, will stand complete in itself till other courts grow alongside it. We do not deny that the sciences may demand special services in their buildings, special dimensions and materials. But surely architects can devise buildings which satisfy these special demands and yet remain adaptable to other possible uses within the same faculty or group of faculties. If such an approach can be assured, we can begin to regard with less apprehension the possibility that the University will gradually cover the great block of land between Downing Street and Bateman Street.

It will immediately be objected that the application of precinctual planning to the expansion of the central science buildings will much reduce their density, and that there is nowhere else they can go. But there is room to the west, and the emphasis has already shifted that way. Newnham marks one end, the University Library the other, of an area ideally suited to University expansion. The development of the Sidgwick site shows that the University realise this. Further afield, too, the growth is started - the new Veterinary Department on Madingley Road, a most clumsy piece of designing and unfortunately very visible. This is further than University buildings should have been allowed to spread (the countryside is far enough away already) but there is a good deal of land off the Madingley road which extensive building need not harm if it be well planned and seasoned with trees.

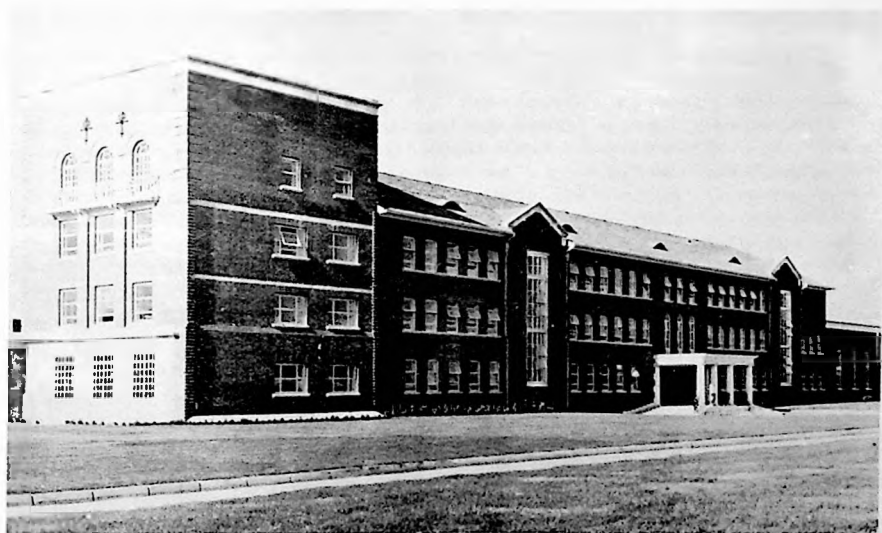
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## THE DESIGNER CRAFTSMEN

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Style in University buildings demands but brief comment. The Downing and Cavendish sites are fantastic mixtures of Tudor, Baroque, Classical, Georgian, modern: most of the buildings have symmetry and a wealth of decoration quite wasted on such restricted sites, and a weight of redundant material which must reduce their efficiency as much as it increased their cost. The purpose of these buildings demands a more modest, a utilitarian architecture, towards which the architect of the Chemistry Laboratory (Fig. 11) and the School of Anatomy, for instance, is certainly turning, though the general scale of these buildings is monstrous. But there is little sign of clear-mindedness in the design of the Veterinary Department building (Fig. 19) of which the crude lopsided self-assertiveness would be hard to equal.

Fig. 19.



## PUBLIC BUILDINGS

The three major public buildings erected in the centre of Cambridge during the last thirty years, the Guildhall, the Shire Hall and the Telephone Manager's Office, are dull lumpish structures of no architectural interest. The main aim of the architects, and presumably of their clients in central and local government, has been to express civic dignity. Bulk, therefore, has been made a virtue, and a square symmetry imposed on the whole building regardless of its setting or of the needs of the real clients, the general public.

The Guildhall (Fig. 21) was built in 1928-30, right across one side of the market-place - a market-place which gains much of its charm from the variety in the buildings round it, and which before that date, was focussed on the lovely church of Great St. Mary's, the quality of which is shown on our cover photograph. The Guildhall has challenged the dominance of Great St. Mary's, which might perhaps be excused if it were not so dull a building. Facing north, it never has direct sunlight on its front, which increased the flatness of a front too high and too regular in plane and tone to be more than an overbearing slab - most unfortunate for the market-place. It has a similar effect on the otherwise charming enclosure of St. Edward's Passage: and it turns Guildhall Street into a lopsided tunnel. A building light in feeling and treatment, at least a storey shorter than this but compacted to keep the same floor-space, would have been far better on the site, and would have allowed a fresh and efficient atmosphere which any rate-payer would prefer to the most emphatic expression of civic dignity.

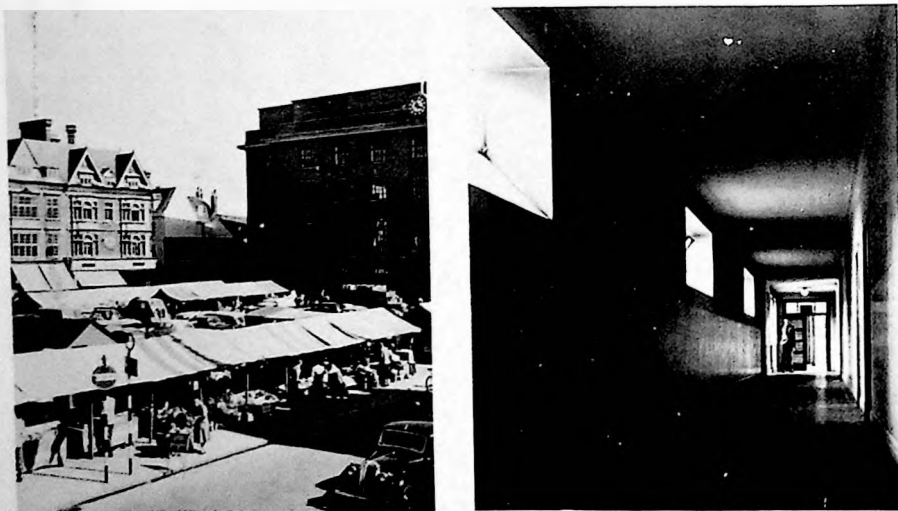


Fig. 21. The Guildhall, a view from the market, and a dark forbidding corridor.



Fig. 22. The Shire Hall



Fig. 23. New annex to the Shire Hall

The Shire Hall (Fig. 22), built a couple of years after the Guildhall, has the same conception. But while the Guildhall has a damaging effect on the town centre, the Shire Hall, being rather isolated, can be dull and lumpish with relative impunity. But the architect, with his preconceptions of civic dignity, has failed to exploit the striking possibilities of the site, which has varied and dramatic slopes and plenty of room for planting. The small new annex to the Shire Hall (Fig. 23) which (fittingly) houses the County Architect's department, shows some awareness of the quality in the site. We must hope that the projected Shire Hall Court, if it materialises, will show the same deftness applied to a larger building.

In the third building, the Telephone Manager's Office in Regent Street (Fig. 24), the dullness, symmetry and bulk are one stage less excusable. It is on a street,



Fig. 24. Telephone Office  
in Regent Street

not overlooking a space: it should thus be one of a progression of buildings subservient to a common axis, not a bulky individualist trying to impose a cross-axis. Not only that: the building is on a corner site, with a side road flanking it and leading to the lovely Park Terrace and Parker's Piece. The Telephone Office pays scant attention to this, dwarfs the entrance to the side road and the buildings on the other side, and leaves a wide untidy yard between itself and the terrace, a yard over which it obviously means sometime to extend. The architect of the extension will have a difficult job, but he must pay more attention to the site than his predecessor.

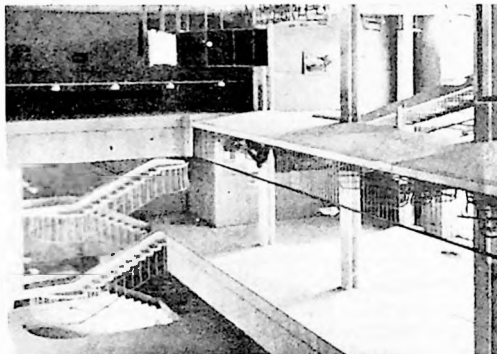


Fig. 26. (above) Staircase in Town Hall, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Fig. 25. (left) Staircase in the Guildhall

Weighty structure and 'Georgian' proportions on the face of a building produce a sombre interior. The staircase of the Guildhall (Fig. 25) shows this clearly - here the steps are in shadow, the landing cuts the window in half, and at eye-level as you climb the stair is a crude and arbitrary frieze. Compare with this the lightness of the stairs at Gothenburg Town Hall, Sweden (Fig. 26), where the architect has thought about what the structure must do before deciding what it should look like.

After these disappointments, we must hope that the imminent flush of public building in Cambridge will be more inspired. The Lion Yard redevelopment is likely to include a number of public buildings, in particular a post office and telephone exchange, a multi-storey car park, and a new Masonic Hall. If these can be as modest and suited to their function as the Guildhall is arrogant and unsuited, it will be well: this is a wonderful opportunity to do something worthwhile.



## COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

The centre of Cambridge holds not only the hub of the University, but also the commercial centre for a region. It would obviously not be practicable to shift this commercial centre elsewhere: nor would it be desirable. The shops alone add much to the delight of the town.

A department store is necessarily big, both in floor area and frontage. It cannot, like a small shop, be carved out of the ground floor of a house, or even of six houses; it must be built for the purpose, and that means building big. The scale is of immediate importance. A building of the size of the Cooperative Store in Burleigh Street (Fig. 27) turns such a narrow street into a canyon. There should be more space in front of it. Cambridge is not suited to wide streets, but the space can as effectively be a junction of roads or a setting back on the other side of the street, such as Joshua Taylor's and Woolworth's enjoy.



Fig. 27. Co-operative Store in Burleigh Street

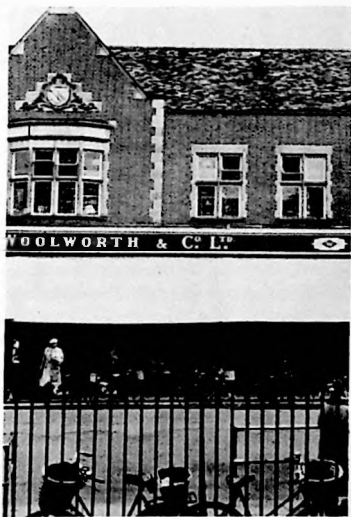


Fig. 28. "deadly neo-Tudor front of Woolworth's"

It would seem that the size of large stores has in the past been used as a reason for dull, heavy designing. In fact, their bulk is a good reason for making them light in feeling, so that they do not glower over the street: and their construction allows such lightness. They need openness on the ground floor, both for display windows on the frontage and for free movement within the shop: this suggests a frame construction for the whole building, which gives the architect a chance to use gay, light panels or cladding for the walls of the upper storeys. Instead of taking this chance, architects in Cambridge have produced the deadly neo-Tudor fronts of Sainsbury's and Woolworth's (Fig. 28), the affected modernism of Coads and the warped neo-Georgianism of Marks and Spencers.



Fig. 29. The Projected Prudential Building: "a catastrophe of the first order."

With the two lessons we have illustrated in front of him, it would be fair to expect that an architect commissioned to design a major store, or a large block of offices-cum-shops, for Cambridge, would take note and do better. Not so the architect of the projected Prudential building in St. Andrew's Street (Fig. 29). Not only is he going to oppose the tall block of Robert Sayles with one of equal or greater size, turning the street into a high and ill-lit corridor: but he is going to cover a building of concrete frame construction with an incredibly insensitive neo-Georgian skin, bringing to this part of Cambridge's main shopping street the same heavy drabness that already stretches from Sidney Sussex to Christ's. The building of this block will be a catastrophe of the first order: must we accept it as inevitable? If so, we can at least hope that its neighbour, to stretch from its northern end to Christ's Lane, will show more awareness of the chance its architect has to produce a lively and worthy addition to Cambridge architecture.

Lesser shops are no less important visually. Confined, usually, to the ground floor, their interest is concentrated where the passer by sees it best. But he must be able to see it, and to see it without being harassed by traffic or jostled out of the way by other pedestrians. Small shops should at the very worst face onto reasonably wide pavements, and ideally onto pedestrian precincts. Provided there is a car-park nearby, a shopkeeper cannot lose by having no cars streaming past his window. The streets which most obviously should be pedestrian precincts



Fig. 30. (above) "Petty Cury and the roads which link it to the market should be pedestrian precincts."



Fig. 31. Shopping Centre at Crawley New Town

are Petty Cury and the roads which link it to the market (Fig. 30); also, when it comes, the new shopping group in Lion Yard. The sort of treatment we envisage for the latter is aptly shown in Fig. 31, a shopping centre in a New Town.

This picture shows the variety and gaiety which can be introduced into shopping terraces built for the purpose. Cambridge has had few such, most of the small shops have been made with varied degrees of gouging and alteration from the ground floors of houses. Fortunately, none of the shops thus made in the centre has a projecting shop-front, as have many in the outskirts of the town; but even the flush fronts put in recently are heavy-handed, for example that of Watches of Switzerland. We must go on waiting for a modern shop-front as good as the Georgian and early Victorian ones, such as Deighton Bells or Norman Bradley's; or, on smaller shops, for one as delightful as Haslop's in Silver Street.

It is worth mentioning how few of Cambridge's shops have attractive night-lighting in their windows. Heffers and Joshua Taylor's (Fig. 32) are exceptions, but there could with advantage be more. Cambridge has its full quota of window-shoppers.

A word on Cambridge banks. A bank has no display windows and tends to 'kill' the frontage it covers. Such is certainly the effect of Lloyds Bank on the corner of Hobson Street and St. Andrew's Street (Fig. 33). The siting of Barclay's Bank in Bene't Street is much better, tucked into a quiet corner away from the more popular shops, though readily accessible still for its clients. The banks in Trinity Street are smaller and make less break in the shopping frontage.



Fig. 32. Joshua Taylor's at night

Fig. 33. "a bank tends to kill the frontage it covers."



**An Old Cambridge Opinion. The Best Coffee is at  
THE COFFEE POT, Green Street.**

## THE URBAN SCENE

College, university, public and commercial buildings are the dominants of the Cambridge scene - but there is much else. Houses: trees: the market: street furniture: ground surfaces: the river and its bridges - these form the urban scene. The emphasis is on the word urban; the quality of a town or city centre cannot but be vitiated by the introduction of rural or suburban elements into it.



Fig. 34. Portugal Place: "it is urban because it is compact"

There are in the centre of the town few houses that have not had their ground floors torn out for shops, for barbers' dens and showrooms. Where this has happened, the dwellings remain; the lively varied elevation of the upper storeys of King's Parade or Bridge Street show the value of their contribution. But in these the front door and the front window are lost, and with them the sense of homely quietude which can still be felt in, say, Portugal Place (Fig. 34). The two most marked characteristics of this little group of houses are its privacy and its urbanity. It is urban because it is compact. It is private because it has no trade buildings, is not a short cut between popular parts of the centre, and is a pedestrian way - this latter is not necessary, but certainly contributes much to the pleasantness of any house.



Fig. 35. "the left-hand side is urban,  
the right suburban"

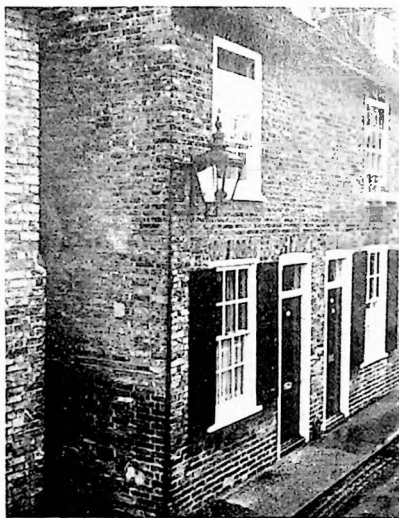


Fig. 36. (right) Houses in Granta Place

Compare with this an adjoining street, St. John's Road (Fig. 35). The left-hand side of it is urban; the right, with its fussy bow-windows and useless gardens, is suburban. The whole is lacking in privacy; one can see readily out beyond it and the road cuts through heedless of the houses.

The only new housing to be seen near the town centre is that on Honey Hill (Fig. 37), a weak design with a mixture of motifs and uncomfortable breaks in its eaves line; set back arbitrarily from the road, it cannot be regarded as a happy foil for the fine row of old houses opposite which are themselves stained by the recent intrusion of a 24-hour taxi service and its advertisements (Fig. 38).



Fig. 37. Honey Hill: "a weak design"



Fig. 38. Northampton Street

We have thought it relevant to include a photograph of some recent housing at Ham (Fig. 39), which shows well how compactness and privacy can be achieved in a completely modern idiom. It is this quality of housing that we would hope to see in future development in the fringes of the city centre.



Fig. 39. "compactness and privacy in a completely modern idiom"



Fig. 40. The market

A market is a delight wherever it be, whatever it sells; that of Cambridge is no exception. The bustle, the chatter, the splashes of colour, the vegetables to scan and jewels to examine, these little things are of uncountable value to Cambridge (Fig. 40). But this value is threatened - by the parking of cars between the cobbles and on the roadways fringing the market-place: by traffic passing on four sides: by the failure to remove the apology for a fountain or to make compact the clutter of huts at the northwest corner: even by a proposal, perhaps inspired by the other faults, to shift the market into Lion Yard. We have not space even to state all the pros and cons of this, but we consider that the market must be kept in its present position; that as soon as is practicable the south and east sides of it should be made, with Petty Cury, into a pedestrian precinct, with access for certain vehicles at certain hours only; that as soon as the Lion Yard car park is constructed, the market-place should cease to hold parked cars; that the fountain as it now stands should be removed, a graceful new feature taking its place if there be the mood and the money; and that the medley of huts, bollards and telephones should be pulled together.



The street furniture of Cambridge holds a few delights and many disappointments. The handsome street nameplates, the fine letter box on King's cobbles, the Victorian gas-lamps, the railings of the Senate House, the bollards and litter baskets - these are well-designed, welcome additions to the town (Fig. 41). But as the years pass, the new things that are welcome are the small things, and those that are bad are big. The gas gibbets in Sidney Street, yawning and askew; the signs along King's Parade, forbidding entry to locomotives or parking on this side; most recent and most horrifying, the vast neo-Georgian torches recommended by the Royal Fine Arts Commission to light the streets (Fig. 42). Was the extra light needed? If it was, these lights cannot give it efficiently, for they throw their glow outwards and upwards, not down where it is wanted. The classical column is so brutalised to suit the material and the purpose, and is anyway so unsuitable a motif for the carriage of a fluorescent tube, that the whole would be ludicrous if it were not disastrous. The view of the Round Church has been killed, the space in front of Joshua Taylor's hacked up, the pavement of Trinity Street blocked: may lightning strike each of these frightful poles!





Photographs of the fig tree at the end of St. Edward's Passage and of the chestnut by King's (above) must suffice to suggest how much Cambridge owes to its trees. They redeem bad buildings, play foil to lovely ones, provide colour, texture, mass and movement. They are not automatically good where they are placed - the chestnut in New Court, Trinity, is uncomfortable: nor do they just appear where they are wanted - the Round Church could with advantage have a tree in its churchyard. We must go on planting, tending, pruning (but not pollarding), and felling where necessary.

In a magazine to be produced at the height of the punting season it is superfluous to extol the river. But a little criticism is not out of place. What has come of the scheme for a riverside walk from St. John's to Queens? Are the Colleges so jealous of their privacy? And what of the stretch below Magdalene, the black stretch between it and Jesus Green?

Floorscape comes well as a last word: Cambridge has a rich variety. Tarmac on the roads, flags on the pavements, grass and cobbles in college courts. These distinctions are familiar: but they are not inevitable. King's College deserves praise for undertaking the complete resurfacing of its paths in cobbles and flags, and for the skill and care with which it was done.

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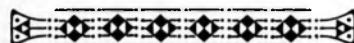
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